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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Letter dated 2 March 1995 from the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

In reference to the statement by Mr. Mate Granic, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, given at the fifty-first session of the Commission on Human Rights on 27 February 1995, upon the instruction of my Government, I wish to point to the following facts.

I am sure that Minister Granic knows well that the cause behind the slow-down of the democratic processes in Croatia is not the alleged "four-year long Serbian aggression", but that it stems from the chauvinistic policy the Croatian authorities are pursuing against the other nations in the region, first and foremost against the Serbs.

The Serbs whom the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Croatia is accusing of aggression have lived in this territory, their own soil, for centuries. Ever since the setting up of Yugoslavia in 1918, they had enjoyed the status of a constituent people, which right they have been deprived of since the promulgation of the new Constitution of Croatia, upon its violent secession. The direct connection between the current Croatian authorities and the traditions fostered by the Fascist puppet, so-called Independent State of Croatia, where, during the Second World War, a horrifying genocide of over 1 million Serbs, Jews, Gypsies and members of other nations was committed, has justifiably given rise to fear among the Serbs of history repeating itself. It is certain that democracy cannot evolve in a State which confers its highest decorations upon established Second World War criminals, which is exactly what Croatia has been doing.

The aggressive policy pursued by the Croatian Government has threatened the very survival and the national and human rights of the Serbs in that territory. The international community, which has deployed the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) subject to a United Nations decision, with the aim of protecting them and of providing conditions for a peaceful resolution of all issues under dispute, has been aware of this fact. Every since the adoption of the Vance Plan, three years ago, and since the UNPROFOR deployment, no armed conflicts have been conducted in these territories, conditions conducive to a peaceful solution have been provided, and a dialogue has been started between the parties directly involved.

As for the allegations of Minister Granic that the inhabitants of the United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs) have been exposed to constant harassment, killing and expulsions, there is no mention of these in any UNPROFOR report covering these areas. The real question is what the actual target of these fictitious accusations is at a time when Croatia is urging the withdrawal of UNPROFOR.

It is absurd to accuse Yugoslavia of aggression against Croatia. At the time of the war conflicts in 1991 which were the outcome of Croatia's secession, the then Yugoslav People's Army, as the sole legitimate military force of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), had the function of separating the warring sides upon the order issued by the Federal Government of SFRY. When the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a continuation of the SFRY was promulgated (27 April 1992), not a single Yugoslav soldier was noted beyond its borders. This fact has been confirmed in the reports of the United Nations Secretary-General.

The magnitude of the wave of Serbian refugees originating in the territory of the former Yugoslav Republic of Croatia who have fled Croatia owing to the nationalistic policies pursued by the Croatian authorities has been such that less than 100,000 Serbs live at present under Croatian rule, as against 350,000 Serbs in 1991. This process of ethnic cleansing, first started by the Independent State of Croatia during the Second World War, is still under way, and there are good chances for Croatia successfully to bring it to an end. The Croatian authorities have evicted almost all the Serbian population from the region of Western Slavonia, a part of the UNPA area.

The decision of Croatia, whereby it intends to deny hospitality to UNPROFOR at a time when substantial progress is being made in the negotiations between Zagreb and Knin, when the implementation of the second stage of the Vance Plan - upon signing of the economic accord - has begun, puts at stake all that has been accomplished so far, pointing to the likelihood of Croatia's resorting to other, i.e. forceful, means in settling its relations with the Republic of Serbian Krajina.

It is sheer illusion to hope that anything but a further exacerbation of relations, with the threat of resumption of armed conflicts with unforeseeable consequences, might be accomplished by breaking off the dialogue and by the departure of UNPROFOR, as the entire international community is aware.

In keeping with its position of principle that all the outstanding problems in the territory of the former Yugoslavia be settled in a peaceful

manner and through negotiations, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia considers that it is indispensable to extend the UNPROFOR mandate, to implement consistently the Vance Plan, to proceed with a dialogue on an equal footing between Knin and Zagreb, thus establishing relations of confidence which will make it possible for the parties involved to reach a lasting peaceful solution. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia welcomes and gives its full support to any solution reached by the authorized representatives of Zagreb and Knin.

Taking all the above into account, the appeal launched by Croatia that the international community exert further pressure upon the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for reaching a peaceful solution is ultimate irony and hypocrisy par excellence.

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate my reply to the statement by Minister Granic as an official document of the fifty-first session of the Commission on Human Rights.

(Signed) Vladimir Pavicevic
Ambassador